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ABSTRACT

A condensation of ideas generated during the 1982 Conference on More with Less, this guide presents methods of saving money, increasing student participation, and influencing decision-makers to maintain school meal programs in the face of reduced federal support. For each topic, specific suggestions, a brief case study, and addresses of resource people are offered. The first three chapters cover saving money through collective purchasing, using Department of Agriculture commodities, and creative menu planning. Ways of enlisting the help of food service employees, computer applications to keeping food costs down, and cost-accounting and increasing food service volume are covered in the next three chapters. The final three sections are devoted to increasing student participation through effective merchandizing, public relations techniques for enhancing community support, and developing "internal advocates" for school lunch programs within administrative and decision-making structures. References to other information sources are appended. (MJL)

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Child Nutrition Forum

Statement of Purpose

The Child Nutrition Forum provides a platform from which organizations with widely divergent purposes and interests can express in a unified voice their support for effective and adequately funded federal nutrition programs for children.

Specifically, the Forum embraces the chief objectives of the National School Lunch Act of 1946 and the Child Nutrition Act of 1966. These are: "... to safeguard the health and well-being of the Nation's children, and to encourage the domestic consumption of nutritious agricultural foods."

The Forum maintains no membership list, rigid governing structure or list of objectives beyond those expressed above. A small and informal steering committee meets regularly to share information about national child nutrition policy developments. From time to time, it will recommend that organizations join with the Forum to operate as a coalition in endorsing a position or statement that reflects this statement of purpose.

Acknowledgements

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Cover Photo: Cecilia Perry

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INTRODUCTION

I don't think that any of us here would dispute the fact that our programs aren't going to be able to survive as long as we continue to have rising costs and declining income, without some dramatic changes.

—Local school food service director

With the budget cuts and the economy the way it is, there will be a trend toward increased cooperation between the powers-that-be and the school boards, principals, superintendents, business managers, and business interests and those in the community who advocate major improvements in the school meals programs. Why is this? We can't afford not *to cooperate.*

—Local community organizer

We decided that the basic priority is getting food to kids. All kids, if they're hungry, aren't going to learn anything. So, that priority is very important to us.

—Representative of a farm organization

These three quotes cover the major themes of this book in a nutshell. Times are hard for the child nutrition programs. In order to keep our breakfast and lunch programs operating, we will have to find ways to save money. Achieving these cost savings and fostering the continued growth of school food service programs will only be done through the joint efforts of school board members, principals, superintendents, teachers, parents, school business managers, churches, community groups, businesspeople, unions, farmers, school food service staff, and voluntary organizations. The common goal that will hold all of us together in this work is our desire for well-nourished, well-educated children.

What Led to the Publication of This Book?

First, a little history: both the National School Lunch Program (begun in 1946) and the School Breakfast Program (initiated as a pilot program in 1966) had a common origin—concern about the health and education of schoolchildren. With the outbreak of World War II, the United States discovered that many draftees had nutrition-related health problems which prevented them from serving in the military. Congress sought to avoid similar problems in the future through the enactment of the National School Lunch Act. They also sought the reduction of surplus commodities through donation to the School Lunch Program, which strengthened the support of the American farm community for the Lunch Program. The School Breakfast Program grew out of Congressional concern for poor children who came to school hungry and children who had to travel long distances to school. How well could they learn with empty stomachs? In 1975 when Congress made School Breakfast a permanent program, it stated that the Program should be made available to all schools where a school breakfast was needed to provide adequate nutrition.

Second, some basics on the programs: both are run by the Food and Nutrition Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and its regional offices. State departments of education administer the programs through school boards in local school districts. Schools are reimbursed by USDA for all lunches and breakfasts, based on family size and income—free and reduced-price meals for lower income children and "paid" meals for higher income children. Schools are required to serve particular kinds and amounts of food in order to be reimbursed.

Studies have demonstrated that these programs are quite successful. School Lunch and Breakfast improve the nutritional intake of children of all ages, and the School Breakfast Program in particular has been shown to benefit children's scholastic performance. Recently two nationwide evaluations have been completed under USDA's auspices which reconfirm the nutritional benefits of these programs ("Nutritional Effect of School Lunch and Breakfast" by Barry M. Popkin, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1982; "The National Evaluation of School Nutrition Programs," by System Development Corporation, Santa Monica, California, 1983). In addition, the System Development Corporation study showed that the presence of a School Breakfast Program increased the chances that children would eat breakfast.

Until recently School Lunch and Breakfast Program participation was steadily increasing. More than 94,000 schools (or more than 90 percent of the nation's schools) were participating in the Lunch Program and about one-third were participating in the Breakfast Program. Twenty-six million children ate school lunches (almost half from low-income families) and four million ate school breakfasts.

Then, during the 1981 legislative session (which set budget levels for fiscal year 1982), severe and unprecedented cuts were made in all of the child nutrition programs. The School Breakfast Program was cut by 20 percent and the Lunch Program by 30 percent. These cuts were made through changes in income eligibility for free and reduced-price meals and by decreasing the federal subsidy for reduced-price and "paid" meals. Changes were also made in the applications that parents must fill out in order for their children to receive free and reduced-price meals, and the level of entitlement for USDA-donated foods was reduced.

Along with the federal changes came decreased financial support by some states and school districts for the lunch and breakfast programs. Also, schools are facing

declining enrollments due to decreased birth rates, which means fewer children participating in the school food service programs and fewer parents to support school food services in their communities. As a result of all these changes, 2,700 schools and three million children dropped out of the Lunch Program between 1981 and 1982, and 650 schools and 475,000 children were lost from the Breakfast Program.

It is tragic that these programs, with such a long history of success, are being lost from many communities around the country. What can be done?

The Conference on More With Less

The Child Nutrition Forum steering committee, a group of Washington, D.C.-based organizations with a common goal of adequate funding for child nutrition programs, decided to respond to requests from local schools for cost-saving and participation-increasing ideas. Obviously, these ideas would not make up for funds lost to every school district in the U.S., but they might be the deciding factor for many districts who may be considering dropping their lunch and breakfast programs.

In June 1982 the steering committee brought together a nationally representative group of thirty-five school food service directors, American School Food Service Association representatives, union representatives, community advocates, superintendents, consumers, parents, a food company representative, a principal, a school board member, public officials, representatives from religious organizations, and a farmer, to help develop some of these ideas. All of these people, in their varying roles, had struggled to maintain child nutrition programs in their communities in spite of potential economic problems.

The purpose of this working conference was to get these "experts" together for two days of non-stop idea-developing. How can schools save money? What are some practical suggestions for increasing participation? How can superintendents and principals be convinced that school lunch and breakfast are important? How can business and farm community support be rallied behind the school meals programs? All of these questions, and many others, were covered.

The format of the conference was short presentations on major topics of interest and small and large group discussions. The enthusiasm, creativity and generosity of the attendees were truly exciting. The group's collective wisdom and experience were recorded by transcribers during the entire conference. This booklet is a distillation of all the helpful information that was presented and discussed.

The Purpose of This Book

This book has three major purposes. All three have to do with the overall goal of keeping school meals programs alive and well in our communities.

- The *first goal* is to motivate people to examine, think up, and try out new ways of maintaining their lunch and breakfast programs. With this kind of creativity, it is possible to keep many good programs alive. And, when we say motivate *people*—we don't just mean the school food service staffs. We also mean school board members, superintendents, principals, farmers, parents, students, businesspeople, etc.
- The *second goal* is to encourage all these people to work *together* to keep school meals programs operating.
- The *third goal* is to give people the raw materials they need to maintain the programs—innovative and successful ideas for saving money, increasing volume and participation, and influencing decision-makers.

Not every idea will apply to every situation, nor are *all* the possible ideas here. (You will have to make the final decision on which methods will save money in your particular situation.) But the steering committee and the conference participants hope that the ideas suggested will be helpful to those concerned about the future of programs which have done so much to keep our children well-fed and, ultimately, well-educated. As Jim Kitson, the Lansing, Michigan, School Lunch Director (who gave the first presentation at the conference) said, the school lunch director faces many of the same challenges as the classroom teacher portrayed in Terry Herndon's statement in *Parade Magazine:*

> *There is no formula for success in the classroom and no teacher is ever completely successful with every student. But each accomplishment is both important and priceless. The teacher, like the farmer, must plant, water, and cultivate his or her crop of students. This makes a fruitful harvest.*

We hope the seeds we've planted in this book will bloom in your minds and help us all to continue nurturing and harvesting healthy children.

CHAPTER 1

Collective Purchasing: Buying Together Saves Money

One area that we've targeted for potential savings is purchasing. We have two major problems with purchasing. First of all, there is not enough volume in any one district to get really good price breaks. The second problem we have is that in many of our small districts the purchasing practices leave a lot to be desired. So, for the past two years we've really pushed cooperative purchasing.

—State child nutrition director

It's common sense that the more you purchase of anything, the lower your cost per unit. To a large extent, volume is the name of the game, and this applies to the purchase of food and supplies for child nutrition programs. Schools and school districts that have joined togetner to purchase what they need have seen great savings. For example, schools in Colorado save from 25 to 40 percent through cooperative buying of staples and canned and frozen foods. In Montana, schools have saved as much as 40 percent over previous costs.

Cooperative purchasing has been particularly helpful to rural areas where individual districts often do not have enough volume on their own to obtain good prices. Also, larger districts can help smaller districts develop more sophisticated and cost-saving purchasing practices. The bargaining power that comes with greater volume buying also gives districts more choices in quality and in the timing of purchases.

Steps to Better Purchasing

1. Find out if your school lunch and breakfast programs purchase collectively with others in order to cut costs.

2. If they do not, ask why not. It might be because individuals within schools have resisted on the basis of losing control of their "turf." With increased cost-consciousness these days, it might be easier to convince superintendents, principals, or school food service personnel to work together on purchasing.

3. If school districts want to, they can work together on a cycle menu* that they will all follow in determining the quantity of food they will need.

4. Central menu planning at the district level is very common. However, you can have central purchasing and *still* have individual managers planning their own meals, using many of the same foods as other schools. This is important to remember because in some areas there is a strong belief that taste and food preferences differ significantly among local schools.

5. Remember: you don't have to buy *everything* collectively.

6. Districts can work together on writing the specifications for the items they wish to purchase collectively. (*Specifications* describe the characteristics of the item which the districts wish to purchase.)

7. The group can also work together on evaluating the food from competing vendors (based on cost, quality and yield) before awarding the bid. ("Bidding" is the process by which vendors compete for your business, each naming a price for the products you want to buy.)

8. Don't limit collective bidding to food. Great savings can also be gained in the purchase of paper goods and cleaning supplies.

9. If buying power becomes big enough, vendors will come to you and offer a bid!

10. Work out a central system for bookkeeping so that each district involved does not have to duplicate that effort. This can be another money-saver.

*A cycle menu is a sequence of menus for a certain period of time which are repeatedly served in that sequence. These planned menus act as a "blueprint" for purchasing.

Some Other Pointers

→ Start with a few districts at first, and then add on others as people get used to the idea and all the "bugs" are worked out.

→ As with any cooperative effort, some flexibility will be required on the part of the "cooperators"—be prepared for some give-and-take. Also, some schools will have to get used to less frequent purchasing—many may have done it on a weekly basis for years and cooperative buying is often done for longer periods of time.

→ At first, some vendors may bid lower to individual districts after cooperative bids have been made and agreed upon. They do this in an attempt to break up the cooperative buying agreement. Superintendents need to nip this in the bud and make sure that their districts live up to their commitments.

→ It's good idea to develop a "code of ethics" for purchasing so that everyone understands the basis upon which bids will be made and awarded. (A "code or standard of conduct" is required for each state agency or school board, according to procurement regulations under the National School Lunch Act.)

→ Cooperative warehousing may be a money-saving device. The warehouse can be used as a storage place for both purchased items and donated commodities. You should compare the amount of money saved by volume buying with the cost of warehousing (including losses in

shrinkage and spoilage) and the loss of interest you might have obtained by investing the money in the bank rather than in the stored food. This equation varies from school to school.

→ In some places, the State Departments of Education have provided technical assistance to school districts in setting up a cooperative purchasing system—through help with cycle menu planning, specifications development, etc. You might want to go together with other school districts and ask for such assistance from your State Department of Education.

CASE STUDY: COLORADO

BOCES Comes to the Aid of School Lunch

In Colorado, six Boards of Cooperative Educational Services (called BOCES) practice collective purchasing. BOCES are service agencies for groups of neighboring school districts—doing things that member districts cannot efficiently do themselves. All six bid on canned foods, paper products, and staples such as flour, sugar and spices, three bid on frozen foods and one on meat items. The majority go out for bid two to three times per year, and conduct a taste-testing session once per year to which all member districts are invited. The individual BOCES do not warehouse food—each district has its order delivered. The charges for participation in collective purchasing vary for each BOCES. Savings for school districts vary from 25 to 40 percent.

One Large School District Reaches Out to Others

The Colorado Springs school district contacted neighboring school districts to see if they were interested in purchasing foods from Colorado Springs rather than from a vendor, and several responded favorably to the idea. As a result, Colorado Springs has increased its volume of food purchases, and receives orders once a week from the neighboring districts. All orders are picked up from the warehouse by the districts themselves. School districts pay a 10 percent handling charge per order.

Both parties have benefited—Colorado Springs has been able to maintain its volume buying power even though school lunch participation is down due to a combination of federal budget cuts and decreasing enrollment. The other school districts have been able to save from 15 to 20 cents per meal, along with getting better quality food. One superintendent said that his program would not have made it through last year without the savings achieved through cooperative purchasing.

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CHAPTER 2

U.S. Department of Agriculture Commodities Can Stretch School Lunch Dollars

It has been my experience that schools, child care centers and elderly nutrition programs that use commodities creatively tend to produce the highest quality, lowest cost meals.

—Community nutrition advocate

In an era of reduced federal support for child nutrition programs, and a time of ever present rising costs, and a general belt-tightening at the state and local levels, one important place to look to combat costs and shrinking resources is your USDA Food Distribution Program and the state distributing agency.

—Private industry commodity expert

Nine of the eleven entrees that we serve are commodity-based which accounts for our low raw food cost of 54 cents per meal. The thing that has saved us this year particularly has been the opportunity to process commodities into the favorite foods of our kids.

—Local school food service director

If you find that you used less than 11 cents worth of commodities per meal—shame on you! If you find that you are in the 11-15 cents range—you still need to do better! If you are close to 20 cents per meal—congratulations, but don't be complacent, you can do better!

—Commodity distribution expert

Having lost $1 billion in federal funds in FY 1982, school food service directors face the continuing challenge of providing their students with high quality, low cost meals. Many directors are looking to the commodity distribution program to assist them in meeting this challenge. USDA currently has approximately 60 foods which schools may use in meal preparation and allows schools 11.5 cents per lunch for these donated foods. This is known as an "entitlement" and represents a level of commodity assistance to be delivered to the state distributing agency by USDA and in turn delivered to the local school food service program by the state distributing agency. The 11.5 cents is broken down into two food categories. Group A represents fruit, vegetable, meat, and poultry items making up approximately 83 percent of the per meal entitlement. Group B, comprising of grain, oil, and peanut products, makes up the remaining 17 percent, and foods in this category may be ordered by the state distributing agency as needed up to the dollar limitation. The proportion of entitlement between Group A and B may vary from year to year. Schools may also receive "bonus foods." These foods, which can be either a Group A or B type food, are designated in surplus by USDA and are available without regard to entitlement to encourage greater consumption. Some bonus foods such as processed cheese, cheddar cheese, butter and nonfat dry milk may be received in quantities that can be used without waste while others are offered in limited quantities. The greater the utilization of bonus items, the greater the per meal contribution of commodities.

The commodity distribution program can provide many benefits to local school lunch programs but it is not without its problems. Issues of quality and quantity of donated foods along with transportation and storage costs are significant concerns. Some of these problems appear to be due to the nature of the system itself in that USDA procures commodities in order to stablize our agricultural economy *and* provide assistance to federal food programs. Hence, the Department of Agriculture tends to balance the needs of the farm community that grows our food and the schools and institutions that consume the food. As a result of this dual responsibility, there occasionally is an unusual supply and demand situation. USDA has an excessive *supply* of a particular commodity because price support programs have resulted in a temporary surplus, or so much of a food is produced that it is removed from the marketplace. However, there may be little *demand* for this commodity if it does not meet school food service preferences. The American School Food Service Association, through its Blue Ribbon Study Committee on Commodities, and USDA are both committed to making the commodity distribution program work. On balance, many school lunch directors believe that the creative use of commodities can lower your program costs and increase the quality of your lunch.

Ideas for Using Commodities

Some suggestions which may help local school food service directors save money through using donated foods are:

→ Increase your use of "bonus commodities." At present, dairy products are the primary bonus foods. Therefore, you should order all the cheese (cheddar, processed and mozzarella), butter and non-fat milk that you wish to use without waste or excessive storage costs. Look for new ways to use these products in your breakfasts, lunches and a la carte programs. Also, keep an eye out for any new foods that are declared "bonus."

→ Every state is required to have an advisory council on commodity distribution. Know how it works! Join the advisory council or make sure that your state school food service association is represented. If the commodity distribution program is going to work for you, you need a state director that supports it, facilitates its operation and knows how to utilize commodities in new ways, i.e., someone who can provide technical assistance on the advantages and disadvantages of processing contracts (see "New Developments"). School food service personnel must work closely with their state distributing agency directors to both encourage improvements and understand the state's limitations in administering the Food Distribution Program.

→ Work with your state's Food Distribution Agency to improve your distribution system and thus avoid extra storage, handling and assessment charges. The State Child Nutrition Director in Alabama, working with the State Food Distribution Director and USDA staff, was able to save at least $750,000 two years ago by developing a new method for commodities distribution which involved the option of direct contracts with commercial food distributors for storage and delivery of USDA commodities. These food distributors received the commodities at their warehouses and combined the delivery of these foods with the delivery of commercially purchased foods going to the same area. The savings were substantial for small districts since the delivery trucks had full loads and maintained a regular schedule. Also, the flow of commodities was evened out—the "feast or famine" syndrome was ended.

→ Consider using bonus commodities to reduce the cost of your breakfast and a la carte products, increase your revenue, and help keep the cost of your school lunch program down. Remember, however, that "entitlement" commodities are provided based on the number of meals served. If a la carte items compete with school meals, you may end up getting less commodities as a result.

→ For the 1982-1983 school year school lunch programs can receive 11.5 cents worth of comodities per lunch as an entitlement. It is important to determine whether refusing to accept a commodity will count against your entitlement. In some situations you are charged for a refusal just as if you had accepted the item. In other situations you are not charged and, in fact, may be offered a different commodity. This distinction is important since unpopular and difficult to use foods can then be refused without diminishing your entitlement support. You may want to consider accepting an item that will be charged against your entitlement whether or not you want it. There are ways to utilize these foods and commodity processing contracts may assist you in this. (However, take into account the costs of receiving it, if any.) This leads us to our next topic . . . new developments in commodity processing contracts.

New Developments in Commodity Processing Contracts

Processing donated foods involves the employment of commercial facilities to convert or re-package USDA donated foods into different end products. For example, a school could accept USDA foods like flour, tomato paste, and cheese, contract with a commercial food processor to meet certain specifications, and in return receive a complete product like pizza. Many directors feel that significant savings can result from the wise use of processing contracts. However, many states do not participate in the processing contracts. Their school districts either do their food preparation from scratch, or they fail to use the commodities available to them.

If a school is considering processing contracts as a way to use commodities, it should analyze its purchases over the past year to determine the number of items purchased that contained potential donated commodities as an ingredient. Compare the cost, quality, and acceptability of the purchased product with the cost, quality and acceptability of a product using your commodity as an ingredient. Also, schools should be sure to compare the specifications for the two products.

Commodity processing can open avenues to greater savings, especially when utilizing "bonus commodities" and when labor costs are very high. The school lunch director for Fairfax County, Virginia reports that they were able to use more than $2 million worth of bonus foods, over and above their commodity entitlement. Using commodity processing contracts and having a supportive state food distribution director were the keys to this success

story. (Check with your state to determine whether you or they should be doing the negotiations for commodity processing contracts.) *Keep in mind that Public Law 98-8, the Emergency Jobs Bill (Section 203), instructs the Secretary of Agriculture to encourage the use of processing agreements.* Regulations implementing this provision are expected shortly.

CASE STUDY: SANTA CRUZ, CALIFORNIA
CREATIVE COMMODITY USES IMPROVE SCHOOL LUNCH

The school lunch program in Santa Cruz, California, produces 8,000 meals daily, serving five other schools besides its own and one hospital. Santa Cruz's school food service director believes that commodities have been the largest single factor in preventing financial disaster in her school lunch program. She uses commodities in everything, yet the program is celebrated for its creative salads, soups and entrees. The vegetable component of each lunch from kindergarten to 12th grade is the salad bar. Twelve choices of vegetables are provided, but no cooked vegetables are served. Fresh vegetables such as sliced carrots and cucumbers are combined with commodities like frozen peas, canned corn, canned green beans, kidney beans, and shredded cheese. Salad dressings are made from yogurt or buttermilk, which are in turn made by culturing another commodity—non-fat dry milk. The school lunch program uses commodity mayonnaise and when this is depleted additional mayonnaise is home-produced by combining tofu and commodity oil. The program also offers 12 kinds of soup, each of which has one-half cup of vegetable and one ounce or more of protein. The soups help to use leftovers and eliminate waste, since beans and vegetables from the salad bar are used along with canned meats and turkeys made available as donated foods. Since a large part of the student population is Spanish-speaking, entrees like burritos and tacos are quite popular. Nine of the eleven entrees served in Santa Cruz are commodity-based, which is why the raw food cost is only 54 cents.

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CHAPTER 3

Reducing Cost Through Creative Menu Planning

We have to respond to the food preferences of the students in our particular community. We found in a school system as large as ours they differ from school to school. We think that if you're going to respond to the taste preferences of the customers in the community, you should have an advisory committee in each school.

—Local school food service director

From the time our kids are two years old, they get to go out Friday night to the fast-food place. Do you want a hot-dog, a hamburger? Do you want a coke or a root beer? Do you want french fries or onion rings? A choice. From the time he can walk, before he can talk, he has a choice. We have got to give them a choice at school meals.

—Local school food service director

We have choices all the way down to the first grade. Some of our elementary schools offer as many as five choices, five menu items. We know that choices do not increase food cost. We know that it does not slow the service if the planning is good.

—Local school food service director

Have a suggestion box for the kids. Never underestimate the chance that students can come up with great suggestions and the good that can come from a student when they feel that they really have a share in the process of planning the meal that they are going to eat.

—Local school board member

You feed kids a decent meal at the best price that you can feed them, and you won't have to worry about public relations or anything else. You feed them a lousy meal and charge them an outrageous price and you've got no public relations.

—Superintendent of schools

There *are* innovative ways to plan school lunch menus that cut costs without jeopardizing nutritional integrity. One way is to analyze the kinds of foods and preparation and serving methods that are used. Much of this is covered in other chapters of the book, but there are still a few things to add on the topic. Another way to reduce costs is to look into the possibilities for self-service and providing choices on the serving line. Finally, involving the students in menu planning, because it tends to increase sales volume, will lead to decreased costs.

Some people use "offer v. serve" as a way to cut down on waste.* However, others call it the "lazy" way and a method that has the potential of damaging the nutritional integrity of the school lunch program if choices within each lunch component are not provided to children. These opponents add that schools would not save money using offer v. serve if they were serving food children liked. If you do use offer v. serve in your school, do it with care and choices.

Ideas for Reducing Food Costs

Consider cooking more from scratch and on-site and providing more service. This will save you money on processing, transportation and disposables. It also might increase student participation. (Remember, however, that it could increase labor costs.)

→ Use commodities as much as possible. Make salad bars with as many choices of raw, frozen and canned vegetables as possible, using meat, cheese, beans and poultry to meet the meat/meat alternate school lunch menu requirements.

→ Make soups from vegetable and meat/poultry commodities and leftovers from the salad bar. All sorts of combinations are possible, which adds variety to meals.

→ Reduce cost by making entrees from commodities —tacos, pizza, vegetarian quiche, tostados, turkey pies, etc. (These are all unitized entrees which can cut down on waste because it is a kind of portion control.)

→ Brighten up commodity fruit dishes with fresh strawberries on top, or some other fresh fruit.

→ Sandwich possibilities are limitless, fun to advertise, and appealing to students. Try a "chicken supreme" sandwich or a Jaws III sandwich (fish in pitabread with lettuce).

→ Don't go overboard with non-essential items on the

*"Offer versus serve" means that students must be *offered* all five lunch components—milk, meat, bread, fruit, and vegetable—but they only need to take a minimum of three for the school to be reimbursed for a full meal. It is required in senior high schools, and optional for elementary, middle, and junior high schools.

menu. Make the entree the drawing card, not the dessert.

→ Think about how the food will look on the plate. Will it look like enough food to the students? Will it spill over?

→ Make sure students get enough food to be satisfied at mealtime.

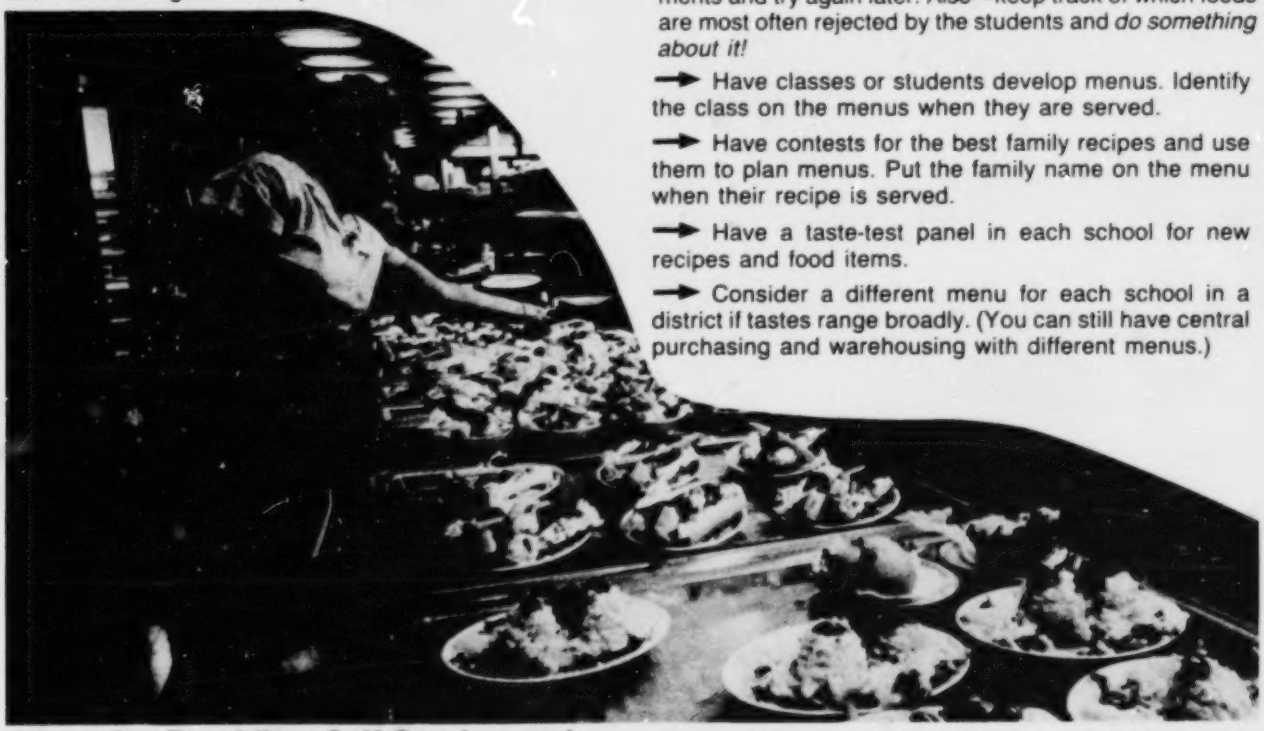
→ Plan bag lunches for field trips or for students who don't want to eat in the school cafeteria.

→ Try soup, sandwich, and fruit combinations to attract students. Do a "deli" sandwich meal, fruit salads, or chef salads. Remember that some menu items really get "worn out" after being served frequently. New items can attract new customers.

→ Keep a menu file of ethnic events, other important occasions and seasonal foods by the month. Use the file to plan inexpensive, customer-drawing menus.

→ Pick nutrients to highlight on certain menus. Star the food items on the menu which are rich sources of the nutrient and give students recipes and snack ideas for the nutrient you're featuring.

→ Brainstorm with other directors and vendors. Everyone has some good ideas you can use.



Ideas for Providing Self-Service and Choice to Students

→ Children like to serve themselves and have choices. It doesn't have to take a lot of extra time or cost more. Try salad bars, potato bars, pasta bars, and build-your-own sandwiches or burritos. (Some schools do this from kindergarten through the 12th grade!)

→ "Offer versus serve," if it is done with the *real* intent of giving children choice options, can be successful. However, if this intent is to be carried out, it means that children must be offered choices—two entrees, two vegetables, two fruits, a choice of milk, and a choice of bread items. They should be encouraged to take all five components—an entree, a vegetable, a fruit, a bread, and milk—rather than eliminating one or two altogether. (Offer v. serve does not apply to the School Breakfast Program.)

→ Nutrition education should be an integral part of offer versus serve, especially with younger children. You have to prepare your customers to be able to make intelligent choices.

Ideas on Involving Students in Menu Planning

→ Do a food preference survey of the student body.

→ Put up a suggestion box in the cafeteria. Respond to the suggestions you receive through the school newspaper in the "nutrition column."

→ Chart all your meals monthly. Set an acceptability level. You should continue to serve anything above the level, but anything below the acceptability level probably ought to be dropped for a while. Evaluate menus served to determine what went wrong, and then make adjustments and try again later. Also—keep track of which foods are most often rejected by the students and *do something about it!*

→ Have classes or students develop menus. Identify the class on the menus when they are served.

→ Have contests for the best family recipes and use them to plan menus. Put the family name on the menu when their recipe is served.

→ Have a taste-test panel in each school for new recipes and food items.

→ Consider a different menu for each school in a district if tastes range broadly. (You can still have central purchasing and warehousing with different menus.)

→ Perhaps most important of all, develop a student advisory committee in each school for the breakfast and lunch programs. (These could also include parents and other members of the school community.) These committees will key you into student preferences, help get the message out to other students, act as a form of nutrition education for those involved, and give some students a chance to be leaders and take responsibility. Don't allow the words, "Our students aren't interested!" to dissuade you from this important undertaking. (The American School Food Service Association has developed useful materials on starting Youth Advisory Councils, or YAC's, a kind of student advisory committee.)

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CHAPTER 4

THE LABOR FORCE CAN HELP YOU SAVE MONEY (AND THE SCHOOL LUNCH PROGRAM)

We are working with all interested parties to maintain program efficiency, decrease waste, promote student involvement, increase participation, and do everything possible to preserve and improve our school feeding program.

—Labor union leader who represents school food service workers

I feel that perhaps I have overlooked a possible resource and an ally. I think sometimes the lack of productivity that we find sometimes in our own school systems is a result of ignoring the labor force we use every day.

—Local school food service director

I could say that if you plan well and if you plan far enough in advance, that with vision, there need not be any labor layoff. Through attrition, through retirement, you can tighten up your meals per hour without any sad cases of having to lay people off. It takes planning, vision, and foresight.

—Local school food service director

So, I think if we are going to protect the school nutrition program and the food service employees—who can sometimes be victims of this economy—we have an obligation to make sure that our programs are efficient and that they are not vulnerable when people do look and look closely at the rising cost and the declining income.

—Local school food service director

Let's face it. The cost of labor in the school food service programs is often the highest expense after food, and like food, labor costs increase with inflation. Unfortunately, when many decision-makers at the local level face rising costs and decreasing federal funding for the lunch program, they decide immediately that the labor force must be cut in number (mainly through layoffs), and that the hours of the remaining workers should be significantly reduced. This has certainly been a trend in the last few years.

However, before making such a hasty decision, the possible ramifications should be taken into account and equally effective alternatives should be considered. The ramifications include low morale among remaining employees, political problems in the community, the impact of community unemployment on the local tax base (which ultimately determines whether the lunch program continues), and meals of poorer quality and less appeal, leading to decreasing participation. (On a societal level, it's also important to remember that women and minorities are the ones most hurt by labor layoffs like these.)

This kind of hasty decision-making comes in part from a view of the labor force in school food service as a "problem" to be dealt with and a group of people who need "something" to make them do better. However, the school food service workers can also be a potent political ally in preserving the school nutrition programs in a community through the voluntary work they do to support the program. Viewing the workforce in this way could be very helpful to local decision-makers struggling to keep the lunch program afloat.

However, that is not to say that improvements cannot be made in efficiency and productivity. Productivity varies a great deal from one school food service program to another—even when comparing similar operations. This is an area that has not been closely examined by many school food service programs, yet there is much that can be done to improve operations. An efficiently run program is much less vulnerable when local officials are looking for ways to cut budgets.

Hints on Better Use of the Labor Force

→ Have you considered maintaining your labor force through increasing the volume of your business? Other schools not currently serving meals may wish to contract with you for food service. Day care centers may be willing to pay for meals for their children. Elderly nutrition sites may need an outside source of nutritious meals. You may also want to involve the school food service staff in catering for other school and community functions, including food sold at football games! It's good for business and for your public image.

→ If you decide to cut labor costs through automation, addition of computers, serving of convenience items, or additional equipment, consider the overall cost of the change. Will it really save money? What will its effect be on the morale of your workforce? What impact will it have on the quality and appeal of the meals, and thus on participation? Can you retrain present employees to run the new equipment or the computer?

→ Develop a long-term labor plan. If you look at your labor needs over time, you most likely will not need to layoff people. Rather, if you really need to decrease staff, you can do it through attrition, retirement, and reassign-

ment to other schools in the district instead of firing people.

→ Add or cut staff in a consistent, fair and orderly manner. Do not surprise people with sudden layoff plans. Besides the human cost, this will not be good for the remaining staff's morale or productivity, nor will it help the school food service program's image in the community.

→ Training sessions are vital to a school district school food service staff in understanding the problems facing their programs and developing possible solutions. Goals should be developed collectively with the staff and action plans for greater efficiency and reduced and/or controlled program cost should be mutually agreed upon and implemented.

→ If your staff is large and/or labor costs are high, it may be a good idea to do more cooking from scratch. You are then taking advantage of available staff time to create a high quality product, and thus offsetting the cost-savings that some convenience items might otherwise bring.

→ Increased productivity requires an investment of time to analyze your situation and provide appropriate training:

- Is staffing based on any objective criteria? It should be based on actual needs. Over-staffing can waste money.
- Does your school food service program have a work schedule? It should. This is a schedule showing where employees are needed at particular times and what they should be doing during those time periods. The schedule is based on the menu—the kind of food preparation, serving, and cleanup that is necessary for this particular menu. (Sometimes each menu item is assigned to a specific employee to encourage high quality products.)
- Have you tried "dual management"? This is being tried in school food service programs across the country. It means that one manager manages two (and sometimes more) programs instead of only one. Often dual managers ask for more schools as their skills and efficiency improve. The results have been very positive: the managers like it because it moves them up on the salary schedule, the job is more challenging, and they spend *all* their time managing instead of pitching in on the food line—they don't have time for that anymore. The schools like it because it's less expensive. And the workers like it because it maintains their jobs—they are all needed in the kitchen workforce because the manager can no longer "pitch in." Dual management is often begun when one manager retires or leaves so that no layoffs are necessary to implement it.

→ If you have tried everything else, and you still need to save more money, other ways to save on labor are: reducing employee hours, buying convenience foods (although this could end up costing more or the same), buying foods which are already cut-up and ready to be incorporated into a recipe (this is called buying "food components" and is somewhere between "convenience" and "from scratch"), or using donated labor or student help (as long as fairness and measurable educational benefits are assured).

CASE STUDY: NEW YORK
UNIONS AND MANAGEMENT HELP SAVE SCHOOL LUNCH PROGRAM IN NEW YORK CITY

The 1981-1982 school year brought with it new eligibility forms to be filled out by low-income families in order to participate in the school lunch program. The parents found these new forms so confusing or frightening that, despite the fact that 96 percent of New York City's school children are low-income, less than half of the forms were returned by October 1981. That could have meant no lunch for more than 250,000 children.

The local AFSCME union, which represents the school food service workers in the city, worked with the school lunch director to get USDA to extend the deadline for application return. Then, school food service employees joined hands with school lunch management to organize telephone banks, making 50,000 calls to parents on evenings and week-ends to remind them about the forms. The union printed one million copies of a bilingual leaflet aimed at getting parents to make sure their children were eligible for a free or reduced-price school lunch. They were distributed to schools, Department of Social Services offices and child health stations all over the city. The union also placed advertisements on the radio and in community newspapers explaining to parents how to apply for the breakfast and lunch programs. As a result of all these efforts, not only was there no loss in participation, but there was a slight increase. Union and management working together made the difference.

The school food service workers and the school lunch director in New York have also worked together on:

- the development of school nutrition advisory committees made up of students, parents, workers, and administrators;
- the establishment of a managerial training program for food service workers at a local college;
- the elimination of paper products in school lunch as a cost-saving measure; and
- the implementation of new storage and transportation techniques for food warehouses which have resulted in the ability to buy greater quantities and achieve savings.

In sum, school food service personnel can be the key to successfully meeting the nutritional needs of students and to doing effective community outreach.

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CHAPTER 5

KEEPING FOOD COSTS DOWN WITH COMPUTERS

Computers cannot be used in all areas of food service any more than they can in all areas of business. Computers are more effective at performing routine, repetitive tasks that utilize common data.

—State director of child nutrition

Some schools have not turned to computers because they fear a loss of jobs. This has not been the case in our program. We simply have reduced paperwork time and redirected our personnel into more productive activities.

—Local school food service director

In summary there are four definite advantages for using computers: 1) improved accuracy; 2) reduction of staff time in routine computations; 3) immediate access to accurate data for management controls; 4) targeting resources where they are most needed and when they are needed.

—State director of child nutrition

What Can A Computer Do For Us?

1. Inventory. Computers work best when you have routine repetitive tasks that utilize common data. In an inventory program the common data is the price per unit that you are paying. With the availability of a modestly priced microcomputer, a manager only has to record the number of individual units that are on hand at the time the inventory is being conducted—all calculations from that point on are completed by computer. This saves time and money since under most current systems a manager's time is tied up in actually writing down what the price of the unit is and then calculating the costs (repeatedly). Computers can provide an incentive for better management of inventory since you have the capacity for maintaining a perpetual inventory and know what you have in stock on a daily basis.

2. Payroll-Personnel Records. Obviously payroll is a routine activity easily handled by computer. Some school lunch programs have minicomputers on which they keep their personnel records by school. Within minutes you can print out a seniority list by job classification and salary schedules complete with employee ranking, rate of pay, or the next date of an employee's salary increase. Time and money is saved by receiving the information immediately. This allows you to act or react promptly, without having to go to your personnel office for one piece of information and have them in turn go to your finance department, where someone has to forward to you the requested information.

3. Accurate and Efficient Use of Bookkeeper's Time. One state director, in a test run comparison of the advantages and disadvantages of doing inventory manually versus with a computer system, found one school with a 60 percent error rate in the computations on inventory. The error was not in writing down how much was on the shelf, nor in writing down the price of the item.... The error resulted from incorrect multiplication of those two numbers. While this may not be a daily occurrence, it is clear that a computer can provide accuracy, and you can count on this accuracy and the reliability of your figures when making important decisions on inventory.

4. Market Orders. Assuming the computer is properly programmed, it should be able to spot a problem where a school is ordering more than would be necessary to serve a particular menu or to cover the entire menu period. Computers can be used to spot items that are not included on the menu for the next period or items that may not be included on your bid. The computer triggers a response that calls the attention of a manager to a problem before a market order can proceed. It will also print out all of the necessary things that you need—copies for the school, copies for vendors, and all of the paperwork is printed automatically.

5. Food Preference Survey. Some schools do a monthly print-out on what foods the students actually consume. The print-out gives the date the menu was served, what the menu was, and how many students participated. It then gives you the participation percentage for each menu served that month. This allows you to determine the popularity of a particular menu.

6. Commodity Utilization. If one school has an excess of commodity flour and a second school's supplies are depleted, a computer can spot the problem and you can save money by transferring flour from one school to another rather than having to purchase flour in the regular market. It can also tell you what is available in central storage.

7. Pre-Cost, Post-Cost of Menus. Menu planning takes time, particularly when the process has to be repeated each time bids change. A computer program can reduce this paperwork burden. It can also help you target food costs. If a menu in a local school is planned with a pre-cost figure of roughly 35 cents a plate, and when you run a post-cost (after it is served to students) you find a 50 cents food cost per plate, this should trigger a call and/or a visit to the school by the school lunch district manager. The cost-savings can be significant since this information is quickly available compared to many current systems which do not manually generate this type of data for 45-60 days.

8. Record-Keeping. There are also programs for free and reduced-price meal applications, and participation and revenue reports.

Jobs

Does computerization mean loss of jobs.? Many schools have found that introduction of computers simply shifts job responsibilities. For example, it may be necessary to shift more staff to the central office to key in the data. As a trade-off, computers should free up the manager's time to concentrate on production. Computers are an aid and should not be used to replace the dedicated and highly motivated school lunch worker. Instead, workers can be retrained to be part of your computerization effort.

Buying the Computer

Remember to get assistance and advice from a disinterested expert before you purchase a computer or a program. You want to get a system that meets your needs and that you can manage. You also want to purchase a program that is written in a language your computer will understand. Look (carefully) before you leap. People who don't are often sorry afterwards.

CASE STUDY: GREENSBORO, NORTH CAROLINA
A DEBUGGED COMPUTER SYSTEM AIDS SCHOOL LUNCH DIRECTOR

The school lunch director for Greensboro City Schools is a registered dietitian with a very strong background in nutrition, but until recently she had no experience with computers. She now uses a computer daily and finds it indispensable to her work.

Greensboro has 43 schools which provide 13,500 lunches and 4,000 breakfasts daily. Before the school lunch program purchased its microcomputer, all data for reports (financial, statistical, audits, etc.) were collected and analyzed manually.

Adjusting to the computer was not easy and required a very substantial time commitment because the program package designed for Greensboro had never been tested. The system needed to be "debugged," and that was hard work. However, the work paid off.

Greensboro's computer now provides the lunch program with:

(1) a timely, accurate method of generating financial and statistical reports, profit and loss statements, special reports (with year-to-date information), a general ledger for each school, and quarterly reports for the state agency;

(2) quicker processing of free and reduced-price school lunch applications;

(3) a system of analyzing plate cost by school, including immediate information on the number of breakfasts and lunches served on a given day and what percentage of each meal was served free or at a reduced price; and

(4) greater efficiency resulting in a reduction in labor costs (two positions), which will be achieved through retirement or retraining of present staff.

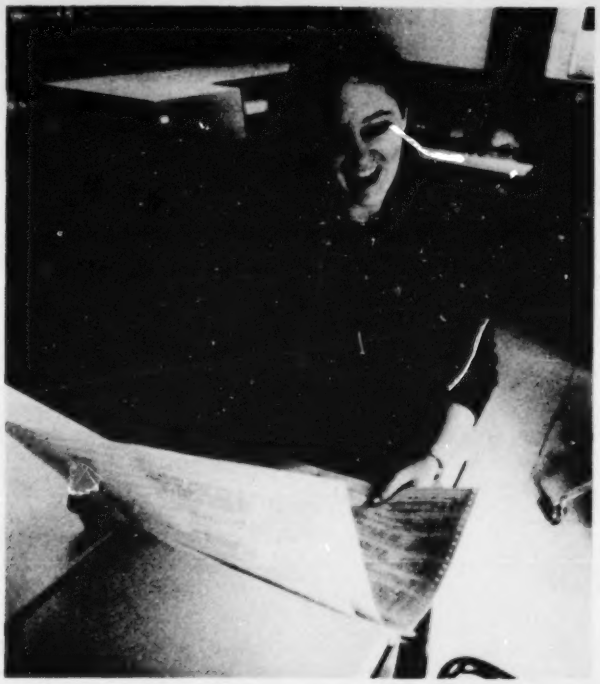
However, the "school-food-service-director-dietitian-turned-computer-whiz" also has some warnings and suggestions:

(1) Consider running data from the previous school year through any new computer system. This should help you "debug" the system.

(2) Be aware that computers "lose information" if the program is not successfully debugged.

(3) Be aware that not all similar computer models "talk to each other." A school lunch director wanted to use the Greensboro system but had another brand of microcomputer. Because the computer language was different, these models could not "talk to each other." New computer language had to be programmed and keyed into the other system.

(4) The Greensboro school system received substantial assistance from its state agency. Each state agency should have a full-time person available for technical assistance to local schools, and state administrative expense money should be available for this purpose.



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CHAPTER 6

KNOWING YOUR COSTS: THE FIRST STEP TOWARD LOWERING YOUR COSTS

One of the critical areas that school districts must get a handle on is their cost-accounting. When you talk to the small school districts in particular, they do not know what it costs to produce a lunch. Yet, cuts in federal-state funds will tend to encourage boards of education to scrutinize expenditures more now than they ever have in the past.

—Local school food service director

If at all possible, the food service program should be considered an integral part of the system, and not a separate entity doing business within the district. Costs to the department should be assigned and reflected the same as any other department within the school district.

—Local school food service director

School food service is a business. And if it is to survive, you have got to be good businesspeople —you have to learn good management skills.

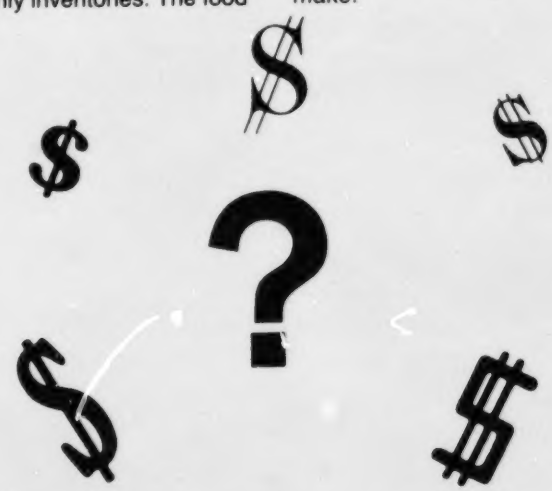
—Representative of farm organization

When you make presentations to the school board, demonstrate that you are doing your best with cost-saving measures and with improved management techniques to absorb the cost increases and maintain your lunch program as much as possible on a self-supporting basis.

—School superintendent

This entire book is devoted to evaluating your lunch program to cut costs without sacrificing good nutrition. So why are we making a *special* point of knowing (and lowering) your costs? There are many ways to save money in school lunch, as evidenced by the headings of the other eight chapters in this Guide, but in order to reduce cost you must first know what your costs currently are. Reliable and timely management information is essential to keeping your finger on present and future costs. School food service directors should play a key role in cost-accounting and not leave it up to business managers alone. This means having an annual budget and knowing its content; reviewing monthly profit and loss statements for the program; and making sure you have complete, accurate and current records of income, expenditures, food supplies, equipment, employees, and monthly inventories. The food service manager should review records daily and use them as a guide for corrective actions to avoid future financial problems. Each item should be pre-costed (what you think it will cost) and post-costed (what it actually did cost). A food service manager should know at the point of delivery exactly what income is versus expenses.

There are many ways to reduce costs and many ways to increase income for your program. However, in order to evaluate any potential cost-saving method, you have to know first what the present cost of each food item and menu is—labor costs, utility costs, food costs, etc. Sometimes people make menu changes which they "think" will save money, but actually do not. You have to be able to compare the *real* costs (post-costs) of alternatives and evaluate the possible ramifications of each decision you make.



Finally, it is important to note that school food service walks a tight rope—it has to be run like a business, but in many ways it is unlike any other business. It is a business which caters to growing children in an educational setting. Breaking even is essential if there is no one to cover the deficit, and is an important goal. But the goals of well-nourished children and nutrition education are also extremely important. For commercial food service operations the latter two goals, if they exist at all, are obviously secondary to making a profit.

Tips for Reducing Costs

→ The price charged students for the lunch plus federal, state, and local funding should cover *all* costs. Adult meals should be priced to cover all costs, since federal and state funding do not subsidize the adult meals.

→ Make sure your lunch program is not being charged for more than its share of "indirect costs"—e.g., utilities, custodial services, and snow removal. (Also, make sure you are not being "double-billed"—the same cost item being charged to you as a direct *and* an indirect cost.) Make superintendents and finance officers aware of the fact that over-charging the school lunch program for indirect costs has a direct impact on the charge to students.

→ Work on cooperative efforts with other districts that might save you all some money, including shared warehousing and transportation.

→ Investigate the possibility of direct marketing of locally produced food to your school lunch program by small farmers or farmer cooperatives who need a market. (A group of school food service directors in Maine have made significant savings by getting squash peeled, cut, and delivered in 50 pound bags by local farmers through the month of December.) Direct marketing is not always dependable or cost-saving, and sometimes local farmers do not have the level of business sophistication necessary to work with the school food service. However, direct marketing is an avenue well worth investigating. (New York State, Maine, and Massachusetts have passed legislation to encourage direct marketing to institutions like schools.)

→ One district in Tennessee grows food for school lunch in its own fields, creating opportunities for vocational education and jobs. (Some school districts even buy or rent apple orchards!)

→ Food service staff should be made aware of the costs of energy in all aspects of the school lunch program and energy-saving techniques. There are many ways to reduce energy costs, e.g., evaluate lighting levels; schedule preheat times so you don't start preheating sooner than necessary; check thermostats on equipment for accuracy; turn off equipment when not in use; clean fans in ovens so they work efficiently; make sure equipment doors close tightly; keep oven and refrigeration unit doors closed as much as possible; and check steam cookers for leaks.

→ Evaluate the cost of paper products, including their use in cleaning. (Does your napkin dispenser dispense one at a time?)

→ Monitor portion control. Make sure it is followed by all the employees on the lunch line. Portion control is making sure that you give each child the same amount of food and the proper amount. It is accomplished through uniform serving techniques. (Some schools, however, have found that they encourage participation and help children by varying portion sizes so that children who need more food can get it.)

→ School food service operations should always keep production records to prevent under- or over-production and to monitor the overall efficiency of operations. (Production records show how much food was used to prepare a meal, how many servings were produced and how many were taken by students.)

→ Smaller districts may find that taking price quotations from several vendors as inventory goes down may save more money than bidding.

→ Trash disposal can be expensive. One school system negotiated with a local hospital for burning trash and cut its costs by 90 percent!

→ Investigate purchasing a warehouse or renting one. Check the cost of a commercial distributor storing your USDA commodities in a warehouse and delivering them to you with your purchased food orders. Also, make sure your storage and delivery systems allow the greatest volume of purchases possible to lower your costs. But, keep in mind that keeping inventory low can save some schools money if their invested money provides a higher return than the cost reductions of volume purchases.

→ Check prices before you buy. You can make significant savings by buying at the right time.

→ Investigate ways to increase your volume of meals through adding on other feeding operations or catering to school-related events. (Make school banquets and receptions produce revenue for the school food service department, not giveaways. Charge reasonable fees for equipment use, supplies, and time worked by staff.) Also, use your food service facility to full capacity, and as close to 12 months a year as possible. Run a School Breakfast Program, a Summer Food Program, a Child Care Food Program for children in after school day care, an elderly nutrition program, and a food program for Head Start youngsters. This allows the spreading of fixed costs over several program areas.

→ A la carte sales can make some money for school food service as long as the charge for these items covers all their costs and they do not detract from the lunch program itself. Unfortunately the items on a la carte lines are often counter to good nutrition education principles and compete with nutritious school lunches which would otherwise be purchased and consumed. *When children buy a la carte, they usually get less food and less nutrition for the amount of money they spend, compared to buying a school lunch.*

→ Sometimes school officials are tempted to contract with a food service management company to run the lunch program, under the impression that it will save them money. This is often not the case, based on the past experience of many school food service operations. Even if the school saves money, it is frequently done at the cost of poorer quality meals, fewer jobs and lower pay for food service workers, and less accountability to students and

parents. If this option is being considered, investigate carefully before deciding.

→ Consider baking from scratch with USDA donated foods. Compare the price with the cost of convenience items, including labor costs. (Baking from scratch can help increase student participation.)

→ Remember that competitive bidding helps to lower prices on all purchased items.

→ Make sure free and reduced-price applications are correct and on file so that the maximum reimbursement can be claimed.

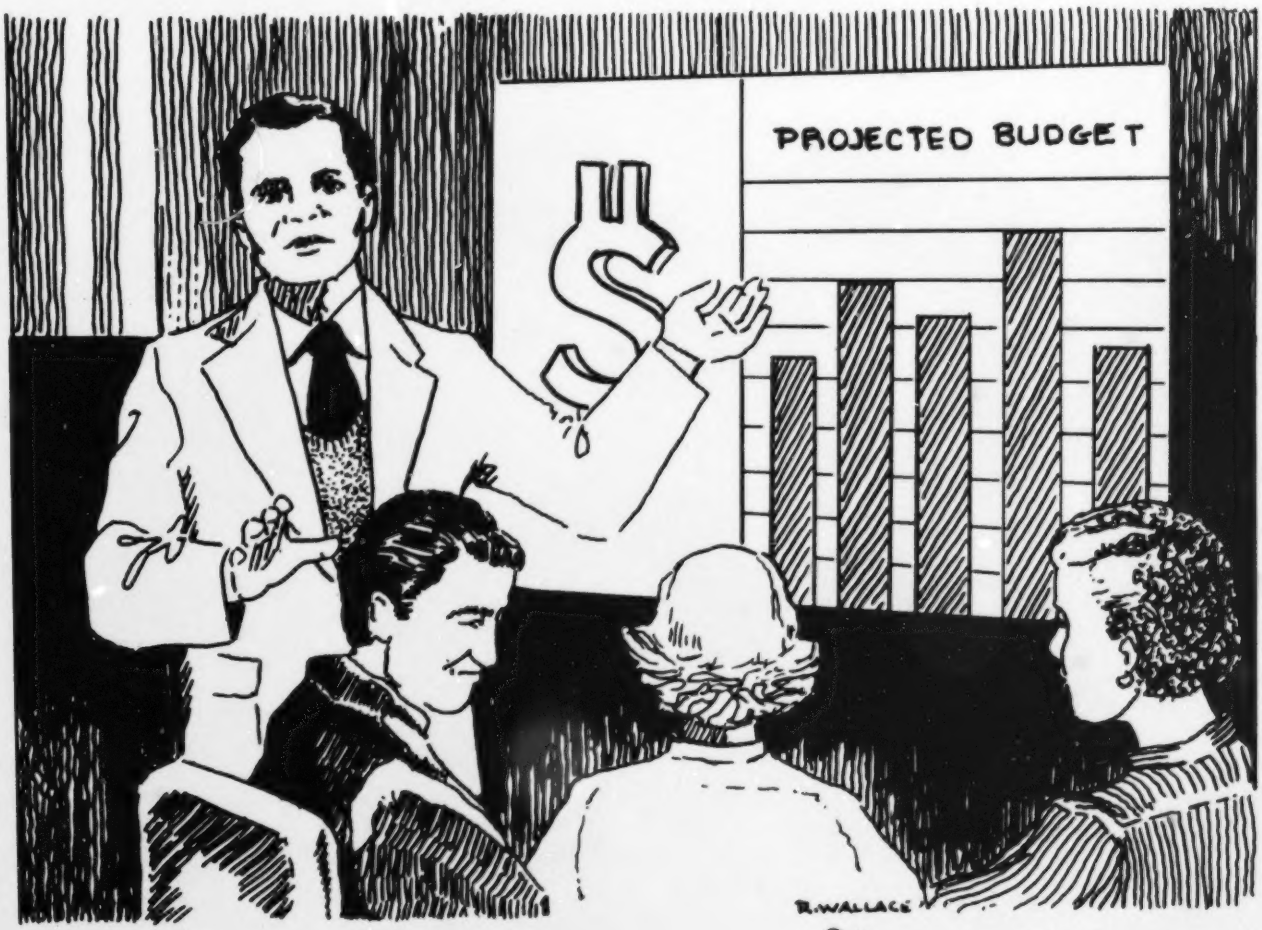
→ Investigate your banking procedures. Are there ways you can invest money in high interest bonds or money markets to get a greater return for the school lunch program? Put funds into an interest-bearing account.

→ Make sure you really get the food you ordered at each delivery. Be there to check to ensure that you get the weight and quality you requested.

→ Check every part of your operation—from telephone and mail costs to laundry (rental versus purchase), to preventive maintenance for your kitchen equipment—for cost-saving possibilities.

→ Work for state legislation that provides a state-financed supplemental reimbursement for each meal served in school food service programs. Seek creative financing for this reimbursement—e.g., liquor or soda drink tax revenues.

→ Centralization of program management can save dollars and result in improved program efficiency. The benefits of centralized purchasing have already been discussed. Consider also the benefits of centralized personnel, banking, bookkeeping, and menu planning. Many of the job functions in each of these program areas may be able to be done more efficiently by one person at the central office level than by one person in each school. Centralization also provides a check and balance system for errors made at the school level which can cost federal reimbursement. Industry accepts that standards for quality and customer appeal will be set by the parent organization, and that franchises will be monitored by district or regional supervisors to insure that these standards are met. Just as centralized purchasing helps to reduce cost through increased volume, so can consolidation of many other areas of program management reduce costs in those areas.



CASE STUDY: U.S.A.
SAVING MONEY AND MAKING MONEY BY INCREASING VOLUME

- The school food service director in Dayton, Ohio, developed a brochure on the School Lunch Program and through it offered their meal preparation services to day care centers, after-school recreation programs, and parochial schools in the city.
- The school food service department in Lansing, Michigan, caters school banquets, coffees, teas and receptions. It also prepares food for the Summer Food Program and the summer migrant program, *and* rents out a popcorn machine for school sports events!
- The Memphis school district's school food service department runs the concession stands in all the school sports stadiums in the area.
- Santa Cruz's school food service staff provides meals to five other school districts and several other small feeding operations in the county.

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CHAPTER 7

INCREASING STUDENT PARTICIPATION: MERCHANDISING IS THE NAME OF THE GAME

The farmer worked so hard, you worked so hard in getting the food to the school, and people work so hard in developing it and putting it on the tray. Well, then you get into the cafeteria, and in some schools I've been to, there are all kinds of crazy things going on. The teacher or aide will be over in a corner with a whistle. Everybody is uptight. It is a terrible experience. I don't know how a kid would want to eat there again.

—Elementary school principal

Our managers are responsible for participation and plate waste and we require them to observe what the students are eating and what they're not eating. Also, they do not have an assigned responsibility at lunchtime because we want them free to talk with the customers. A lot of them will go out and sit down and actually eat with a group of students each day. We think it's essential that they have that informal dialogue.

—Local school food service director

We'll celebrate anything!

—Local school food service director

No one can deny that there was an enormous decrease in student participation in the National School Lunch Program nationwide in the 1981-1982 school year, largely due to budget cuts at the federal level. Many schools need to get those students back into their lunch programs to keep their programs alive. Obviously, part of the solution is to decrease the costs of food production and increase the quality of the meals, but another piece of the puzzle is the merchandising of the program.

To eat or not to eat school meals is a decision parents and children make everyday. In order for them to decide to eat, the program must have a positive image in their minds. Adults must feel that the program is managed by professionals who keep their skills updated and who care about nutrition. They also have to feel that the meal is worth the money. Children need to feel comfortable and happy eating in the cafeteria, they need to think that the food tastes good, and it helps for them to feel that they have some say in how the program is run—that people pay attention to their needs, their desires, and their complaints.

Ways to Make the Program A Good One

→ Make sure hot food is hot and cold food is cold.

→ The food should look good. Make sure it is not sloppily served. The colors, flavors, and textures should be interesting and go well together. Make the trays, bowls and plates look appealing. Serve a variety of foods over time—not always "the same old thing." Offer a choice of foods at each meal.

→ Ask staff to taste the food to make sure it's good—even the milk, to make sure it's cold and fresh.

→ The atmosphere of the cafeteria ought to be pleasant. That means good ventilation, cleanliness, a good smell, good lighting, and attractive colors. It means enthusiastic, smiling, friendly cafeteria workers with attractive uniforms.

→ A pleasant atmosphere also involves speedy, efficient service so that no one has to wait in line endlessly for bottlenecks to work themselves out. It means that children have enough time to eat in a peaceful atmosphere.

→ Make sure that children don't have to eat lunch with their coats on because of recess scheduling.

→ Managers ought to observe what students are eating and not eating. Have them talk informally with students to find out why. Managers do better when they feel responsible for participation and plate waste.

"Selling" the Program to Students and Their Parents

→ Make the application for free and reduced-price meals as simple and easy-to-read as possible.

→ Ask voluntary associations, church groups and unions to work with you in encouraging low-income and recently unemployed families to apply for free and reduced-price meals. Use telephone banks, brochures, media spots, and one-to-one assistance in filling out the forms.

→ Do a brochure or media spot on the benefits of school lunch versus bag lunches, fast food restaurants, vending machines, and a la carte items. Emphasize the increased variety, superior nutritional value, and better value for the cost that are achieved with participation in the school lunch program.

→ Get the support of the teachers in your efforts to encourage children to participate in the nutrition program.

→ If students are not taking an item, or returning a

large portion of it, have a "get acquainted taste party" for that food with the students, or serve it as a choice.

→ Introduce new menu items in one ounce "taster" portions with a rating card attached. Use student ratings to determine whether to include this item on a regular basis.

→ Serve foods common to the ethnic groups your students represent.

→ Serve menus from different countries and different regions of the U.S. Wear special costumes for each one and show videotapes of how to eat with chopsticks or how bread is made in India. Use the talents of school food service staff, parents and teachers to extend these themes to the classroom.

→ Have the health classes analyze the nutritional value of several school lunches or breakfasts that are served in your school. Post their analyses.

→ Have art classes tour the kitchen and draw what they see.

→ Have the drama students write nutrition skits and present them.

→ Have a "local action" bulletin board in the cafeteria to be used to announce what's happening in the school.

→ Give kitchen tours for groups of students.

→ Have leprechauns, witches, Santa Claus, the Easter Bunny or Pilgrims visit the cafeteria near the appropriate holidays.

→ Celebrate the principal's birthday with a special school lunch.

→ Have guessing games—the size of a swimming pool that would hold the milk served on a particular day, or how many eggs the school lunch and breakfast programs use per month.

→ Promote new menu items with "trivia," interest catchers, and facts. Explain or even demonstrate how they are made. Use adjectives to describe them on the printed menu, or include illustrations.

→ Give a discount to families who buy five or ten day school lunch tickets.

→ Do nutrition education in the classroom which relates to what is being served in the cafeteria, including preparation of the foods.

→ If you can't get high school students to come in for lunch, go out onto the school grounds with bag lunches for them.

→ Schedule recess before lunch so students are more relaxed in the cafeteria and have keener appetites.

→ Jazz up the cafeteria with curtains and the employees with aprons made by the home economics class, painted furniture and screens by "shop" classes, murals, drawings, and bulletin boards by art students, or music once a week by a student disc jockey.

→ Celebrate past or present famous people's birthdays by serving their favorite foods for lunch. (Have the students research favorite foods of the famous.)

→ Have surprise days when students with special trays get a prize.

→ Have the "nutrition reporter" from the school paper tour the kitchen and write a story.

→ Provide students with recipes for some of their favorite menu items or for new items on the lunch and breakfast menus.

→ Celebrate National Nutrition Month. Invite local dietitians and nutritionists to help with the events.

→ Celebrate National School Lunch Week by emphasizing good food, exercise and rest for a healthy heart. Feature menus low in fat, sugar, and salt and do a cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) demonstration for the students.

In short, use your creativity and the sky's the limit!

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CHAPTER 8

Improving The Image of School Lunch In Your Community: Expanding The Network of Support

We all go and talk to each other. We don't need to talk to each other. If every one of you went to all of the service clubs and said, "We've got a speaker for you about the school lunch program," you might be surprised how far this would take you. You could go to every service club, the Rotary, for instance. Find somebody who can give a good, well-organized 10-15 minute presentation. You'd be amazed what could happen in that community as a result of your efforts.

—County school superintendent

It really does improve the image of the program to have food service people open to what parents have to say. Some parents are dissatisfied with the way things are working and they really want to see something happen. You appoint them to a committee, and get them working on the solutions with you. That reduces a lot of their frustration. You make them feel like they are actually part of the solution. It is the same with anyone else in the district.

—State anti-hunger advocate

I realize that fewer people have children in school. We have more non-parents than ever before. We must therefore communicate with the non-parents to make them a part of our system. Then you will find that you have an ally that you didn't know existed.

—Local school board member

If you tell us where you need the help, we'll help. Children are something that we have never had a problem in going to a school board about. If you get a bunch of farmers in there to back you up when you are feeding kids, people will listen. We are willing to do that if you can find a way for us to help.

—Dairy farmer

In order to maintain the school food service program in your community, you will have to convince the voters, decision-makers, and parents that it is a program worth funding and worth participating in. But don't despair—there is a vast network of potential support for your food service program right in your own backyard. You just have to look, and make contact.

Work on being a powerful salesperson for your program. Make your program visible in your community. Show people what you have to offer—a program of nutritious meals that is worth the price and that is managed by caring and skilled "professionals." Tell them about the studies that have been done which show that the school lunch and breakfast programs improve the diets of school children.

Use meetings, use the media, use community events—whatever it takes to help parents and non-parents alike, farmers, businesspeople, civic associations, legislators and everyone else understand how good and important your program is.

Reaching Parents

→ Be at every PTA meeting. Bring displays of lunches and samples. Cater refreshments at the meeting.

→ Have menus published in the local newspaper and/or send them home with children. Use the menus to communicate with parents about school meals, but also be open to including other school-related news and concerns on your menus as a service to the whole school.

→ Have an open-door policy for parents to eat lunch. Encourage them to share ideas with school lunch managers.

→ Invite parents to volunteer to work "behind-the-scenes" in the food service program to see the program operate first-hand. Or, involve parents in making table decorations or helping with classroom nutrition education that is related to what is being served in the cafeteria.

→ Get parents involved in Community Advisory Committees to the food service program which include businesspeople, civic leaders and other "community friends" and meet regularly to make recommendations for improving the program.

Reach Civic Associations, Public Officials, and Businesspeople

→ Be a speaker at a Lions Club, Rotary, Kiwanis, or ladies auxiliary meeting. Talk about your school food serv-

ice program with them. Invite them to have a meeting in your cafeteria!

➞ Take advantage of the "private sector initiative" that many businesses are backing these days. Ask them to put their time and money where their rhetoric is—nicely, of course. (Don't forget local brokers and bankers.) Local businesses can help by providing moral and political support, equipment, ideas and assistance on better management techniques (retired executives might be particularly helpful in this area), and even funds for decorating the cafeteria to make it a more pleasant place to eat.

➞ When local businesspeople come to your school for "Career Day," invite them to stay for school lunch.

➞ Have a business, civic group or church group "adopt" your lunch/breakfast program—helping it to survive financially through the next few years.

➞ Through a direct marketing project with local farmers, develop a strong alliance with the farming community. (See page 19 for more information on this cost-saving possibility.)

➞ Get to know your local, state and federal government officials. When legislators come to town, invite them to your program along with the local media.

➞ Catering for local functions, besides making money for your program, can also improve your image in the community.

Don't Leave Any Stone Unturned!

➞ Remember allied health associations, area nutrition councils and dietetic associations, dental, heart and medical associations, the Red Cross, and individual health professionals.

➞ Don't forget labor unions, Girl and Boy Scouts, and service fraternities and sororities.

➞ Develop a monthly newsletter for parents and others about your school lunch program. Make sure it's widely seen and read. Remember to send it to state legislators and your national Congressional offices. Include nutrition education information, home-size recipes for favorite menu items and information relating to special menus being served during the month to keep parents informed about your program.

➞ Include nutrition tips when menus are printed weekly in the newspaper. This shows the public that you are interested in the nutritional integrity of the program.

Sponsor Events to Publicize Your Program

➞ Develop materials for your staff to use during these events. Create slogans, brochures, and audiovisual presentations that everyone can use.

➞ Provide educational exhibits such as sample lunch trays with charts of nutrients for shopping centers, health fairs, community festivals and even walk-a-thons.

➞ Encourage your local school board to adopt a resolution declaring the second week of October National School Lunch Week. Get the local media to cover the resolution and what you do that week to celebrate.

➞ Cater a school board meeting. Show them how good your program really is.

➞ Have Grandparents Day at school and invite them to lunch. Or, send special invitations to Congresspeople, local government officials, businesspeople, school board members, nursing home residents, police, firemen or school bus drivers.

➞ Honor special people in the community by inviting them to lunch and serving their favorite food—the superintendent, the governor, or even the owner of the corner grocery store.

➞ Identify a guest table where a student may select a friend to eat with as well as his or her guests—parents, a Little League coach, or neighbors.

➞ Organize a local coalition of school board members, farm organizations, school food service staff, community groups, etc., on behalf of school lunch. Write a press release or hold a press conference about your newly-formed coalition and its goals.

Use the Media

The media can be a very good tool in building awareness of your program and what it has to offer. It can get your opinions out to the decision-makers.

It can help parents and other people in your community make good decisions about where the money goes. It can help you build a group of advocates around your school lunch program. There are various kinds of media that can work to your benefit in a lot of different ways.

—Media specialist

Some Pointers on the Use of Media

1. Establish a media list of newspapers and radio and TV stations that serve your community.

2. Get to know the city editor (he or she decides what is covered), the food editor, and the education editor on your local newspapers. Get to know the program director or manager of your local TV and radio stations. In approaching them, you might begin with a simple fact sheet on your program, supplemented with articles, publications, pamphlets, and brochures to which they might not have access.

3. A simple and direct way to get information to a newspaper is a *letter to the editor.* With it you can introduce a new idea to your community, respond to something going on, or correct or add information to an article that has appeared in the paper. Be clear, concise and prompt with your letter.

4. You can use a *press release* to announce an upcoming event that you are planning to publicize your program. Write it in a "pyramid style"—that is, put the most important information at the beginning. Use catchy sentences and don't use jargon. Use double spacing and include your name, address, and a contact person's phone number. Make sure you don't send it too close to the date of the event *or* too early. Follow up with a phone call on the day of the event. If a reporter does arrive at your event, don't leave him or her stranded—help the reporter find the right people to speak with.

5. If your event is not covered, try again with a *photo release.* Photograph the event yourself and have the black and white glossy photos printed as 8x10 or 5x7 prints. Write on the back who is pictured (make sure you have parents' release signature if students are in the photograph), when, and where, and include a simple press release.

6. A *press conference* is based on a press release, but it takes more work. Hold it in a meaningful place—like the school cafeteria! Have several short presentations by different individuals and then a question and answer period for reporters.

7. *Public service announcements* (P.S.A.'s) are free—they are a public service of radio and TV stations. Use them to announce events or publicize certain aspects of your program. (They are written like a press release.) Some of your students might want to be involved in the making of a P.S.A. on school lunch. You could do a week-long "media blitz" of P.S.A.'s on school lunch, with the cooperation of your local TV station.

8. Try to get on a local *talk show.* Raise community consciousness of your food service program by bringing a panel made up of a nutritionist, a parent, a school food service worker, and a school superintendent. To get onto the show, write a letter to the program director of the station or show. Describe your organization, suggest a topic, outline possible questions, and send any press coverage you've had. Follow up with a telephone call.

9. *In all of your media efforts, don't give up if you don't succeed at first!* A press release you do today may spark interest in a future story. Be creative and keep on trying—often timing and luck will help you out.

10. Get a local *disc jockey* to sing your menu over the radio!

EXPANDING YOUR NETWORK OF SUPPORT: HOW OTHER SCHOOLS ARE DOING IT

- In New York City, school nutrition advisory committees have been developed in the majority of schools. These committees of students, parents, workers, and administrators work together on every aspect of the school food service program. They act as forums for menu evaluations, the discussion of disciplinary programs, planning decorations for the cafeteria, etc.
- In Texas, the governor proclaimed Texas School Lunch Week and encouraged schools to serve Texas products for lunch that week. Posters of those products were provided free to school food service staff. Local school districts took advantage of this by celebrating School Lunch Week with legislators, city council members and school boards as invitees to school lunch programs highlighting Texas products.
- In Colorado, the State Education Department, in cooperation with the American School Food Service Association, developed what they call *Teaching About Nutrition.* It is a comprehensive package of speeches, case studies, posters, and materials for use with the media. Local school food service staff will find it very useful in promoting their school lunch programs.*
- In Memphis, Tennessee, the school lunch program provides lunch to the Realtors Association when they bring their members on a tour of communities and their schools. This way the realtors learn about the lunch program first hand and can let their clients know about it.
- In Hazen, North Dakota, the school lunch program uses a wheat grinder donated by local bankers to prepare local wheat for use in bread preparation. It also uses a corn sheller donated by a food company.
- A bank in Maryland sponsors a radio announcer who does several morning spots everyday promoting school lunch.

*The American School Food Service Association is making it available for $100 a set. A set may be ordered from Jennifer Krug, ASFSA, 4101 East Iliff Avenue, Denver, Colorado 80222. Also, each State Department of Education has one full set of these materials, which is available for loan. *Teaching About Nutrition* was reviewed in the November-December 1982 issue of *School Food Service Journal.*

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*Bread for the World has developed a comprehensive *Media Kit* which is available from their Washington headquarters for $4.00.

CHAPTER 9

Influencing The Decision-Makers: Understanding The Viewpoint of Principals, Superintendents and School Board Members

Now, the school board members really know very little about the operations of their lunchrooms and their food service sections. Yet, most school board members come on board with more familiarity about food than probably any other phase of the public school system that they are entering when they come in as a board member. They learn less and they maintain little or no interest because the lunchrooms are frequently not an integral part of the business of the school board. Board members are not required, and sometimes, not even asked to participate in many decisions concerning the lunchrooms; that is, until a problem arises. It is now necessary for school board members to become more knowledgeable about the operation. I ask you to target the board for education in nutrition and feeding. Don't deal the school board member a crisis hand and expect him or her to come up with a good answer.

—Local school board member

I personally have found if you have a principal on your side who can then carry the ball, and if you can convince the principal that the work is good for his or her school, then this is probably the key individual. The principal can be very effective in talking to the superintendent or with the school board member.

—Local community organizer

It is often difficult for school meals program staff to take the lead and take the heat that is generated on these issues. Sometimes you can work things out within the structure of your school, but when you can't, it is to your special advantage to have a community group take the lead and support your programs. It is also their program, and that ought to be real grounds for cooperation.

—Local community organizer

When you are trying to keep your nutrition programs alive, it really helps to have what some people call an "internal advocate." That refers to an individual (or several people) who work within the decision-making structure, are sympathetic to your concerns, and are knowledgeable about the program you want to maintain. A typical internal advocate could be a principal, a school board member or a superintendent. These people may not know anything about the school nutrition programs at first but you can help them to learn and care about the program.

You should keep in mind that each of these people already has a different perspective on the school nutrition programs based on their responsibilities and experiences. That means that each one should be approached in a way that is tailor-made to his or her need for information. However, one theme that should be stressed with all of them is that child nutrition programs are education programs. These programs benefit children in their scholastic performance, they lead to better behavior by children in school, and they can be used effectively to teach good nutrition.

The Principal

Principals are unique in their relationship to school nutrition programs in several ways. They see the students face-to-face every day. Thus, they have the opportunity to observe listless, tired children who haven't eaten, and are aware of any behavior problems in the school. They also have a direct relationship with the food service manager in their school. Principals will be most interested in how the program affects the overall operation of their schools.

Principals are also special because of the power they hold within the school. They can change schedules so that the numbers of children in the cafeteria at any one time during the lunch period is staggered in order to create a better atmosphere for eating. They can schedule recess before children eat lunch so they are more relaxed at lunchtime. Principals can suggest that nutrition education related to the school lunch and breakfast programs be incorporated into the curriculum or that the curricula of shop, home economics, and art classes include the beautification of the cafeteria. Through their leadership in the

school, principals can encourage merchandising campaigns to increase participation in the school nutrition programs or start parent-student advisory committees to the school lunch and breakfast programs in cooperation with the food service manager.

In short, a principal's feeling about school nutrition programs can go a long way toward determining whether a program continues to exist. Having a principal on your side is invaluable.

The Superintendent

The superintendent is different from the principal in that he has many schools and many aspects of these schools to worry about. He also makes major budget decisions that affect the entire district, including each school's nutrition programs. You should expect that the superintendent will not have detailed knowledge of the nutrition programs. (In fact, the only information he or she may receive about the program are complaints!) You should also expect that a superintendent will treat the nutrition programs the same way as any part of the school system and that the superintendent may not allot a large amount of time to the study of this program.

Superintendents are more likely to approach the program as hard-nosed businesspeople concerned about cost-effectiveness. They will appreciate a well-planned school food service budget and a program plan that shows what is expected in the coming years and how well the program has performed compared to past plans. In short, they will be attracted by good food at the best possible price. They can help carry the ball for you, or at least not stand in your way, in a struggle to maintain the nutrition programs.

The School Board Member

The school board member represents the total community, and in that sense is more likely to take a special interest in the impact of the availability of nutrition programs on children in the school. However, they, like the superintendent, are looking at the complete educational welfare of students in the school, including curriculum, staff, facilities, and transportation. Also like the superintendent, they may hear only complaints about the program, and may have no other information to go on in judging the program's value.

All of this leads up to the major point—they need to be educated about the complete operation of the program, including, for example, what commodities are, who recruits the staff for the program, what the salaries and hours of workers are, what kind of training programs exist for employees, who replaces worn-out equipment, who plans menus and buys the food, who handles the money, what the regulations are that govern the kinds of meals served, etc. School board members ought to be invited to eat school lunch on a regular basis. They need to gain enough knowledge about the program so that, if a crisis arises, they can help work out a good solution.

Finally, it really helps to know school board members personally. Members who are sympathetic to the program should be provided with the information to help them make their case. Also, school board elections are a good vehicle for finding members who are sympathetic to child nutrition programs.

Some Specific Ideas for Action

→ Work with the school food service staff to make the programs worth supporting. Urge the school food service director to get positive facts about the programs to school board members, superintendents, principals and business managers.

→ The school board could form a school nutrition committee (including some of their members and other representatives of the community) to work on improving the school food service programs and advertise their successes.

→ If other school systems you hear about have successful nutrition programs, some of your school board members might be able to learn from visiting with them.

→ Encourage your principal or superintendent to communicate with and visit pro-school food service program principals and superintendents.

→ On the state level, a joint meeting of superintendents, principals and school board members could be held with the theme of maintaining the child nutrition programs.

→ A regional "school breakfast" or "school lunch" could be held by a superintendent or a principal to which neighboring colleagues are invited. The purpose would be to encourage the maintenance of the child nutrition programs in their districts.

→ Ask a sympathetic superintendent to write letters to all the principals in the district concerning the importance of the breakfast and lunch programs.

→ Develop a monthly newsletter on your programs and make sure school oficials receive it. Include interviews with supportive officials in your newsletter.

→ Use the media! (See Chapter 8, especially page 27.)

Working Together to Maintain the Child Nutrition Programs

The threat to the existence of the child nutrition programs has brought together many community groups in support of the programs. The success of their efforts is essential to the continued existence of child nutrition programs. They are the other piece of the puzzle that consists of the many decision-makers who play a role in determining the future of school meals. Many times school officials who can't stick their necks out very far appreciate the help of community groups. These officials may even provide outside groups with "inside" information that is useful to them in their efforts. Below are some pointers developed by local advocates for community groups who want to support school meals programs.

Pointers for Rallying Community Support for School Meals

→ **Get together a meeting of people who are upset about the threats to the continued existence of your program.** Recruit others and other organizations. (Don't forget to involve teachers, school food service workers, PTA Members, and retired school food service employees.)

→ **Get educated.** Know your community. Learn who cares about what and where the sources of power are. Learn the hierarchy of power and who needs to be convinced. What turns them on and off? Who knows whom? Remember that many people in your community do not have children in school. How can you reach them?

→ **Learn about the decision-making process.** How and when are decisions really made? Which sub-committees are involved and when do they meet?

→ **Try to know your issue better than the decision-makers.** Learn about the regulations that govern the programs, the reimbursement levels, the level of participation, any problems with the programs, and their educational and health benefits. Know how much they cost and how they are financed, including how much comes from federal, state, and local sources. If the problems are major, develop reasonable solutions. (A restaurant owner or an accountant in your community might help in analyzing the budget. Find out where the extra money is in the budget that you need for school food service.)

→ **Define your issue and develop a plan of action to educate the persuaders and decision-makers in your community.** You may want to develop a written document and present your case orally.

→ **Decide on spokespersons and where they should be speaking—one-on-one, through the press, or in large meetings where members of your group are there to provide support.** Match appropriate persuaders with decision-makers. If one decision-maker is not sympathetic, try another. Concerned parents, ministers, teachers, and local businesspeople can have a great influence on some of the people you'll be trying to reach. (Parents may need help in gaining the self-confidence to talk to some authority figures.)

→ **Stress that the continued existence of the program is possible (budget-wise),** practical (from a health and educational standpoint), and the moral thing to do as a community decision-maker.

→ **Ask for a response as soon as possible.**

→ **Don't forget to celebrate any victories!**

Pointers on Keeping School Lunch in the Budget

The point that I'm trying to make is, as the pie grows very slowly, or not at all, we are going to find ourselves in competition with other kinds of departments and agencies for limited dollars. We are going to be fighting with the county boards and the city councils to try to convince them they ought to put bucks into public education and into the school food service—to give us a fair share. It is a political process, and in the end a subjective decision has to be made. We have to become more involved in that political process.

—Superintendent of schools

With federal cutbacks and shift of responsibility and power to levy taxes going back to the local and state level, local organizing is even more imperative to sustain school meal programs. We have to have clout in our communities to say where and how local money that is locally raised will be spent.

—Community organizer

1. As some school lunch programs become less self-supporting, it is imperative for everyone concerned about school meals to **be familiar with the total school system operating budget.** Learn it. Monitor it. You will have to serve as your own advocate in the budget process. Get the facts so you can ask the right questions.

2. Read the budget document. It addresses all the key factors, including the hard facts (the things everyone agrees on regardless of their personal opinion, e.g., how many meals are served and how much they cost) and the soft facts (interpretations of the hard facts). Review both the revenue information and the expenditure data.

3. Look for answers to your questions in the document. Which programs have been decreasing in funding and which are increasing? Why? Have the officials in the past accurately estimated the expenditure portions of the budget? Which ones? Are the budgeted figures meaningful in the context of the budgets of other school districts in your state and the nation? (Use the Educational Research Services* [ERS] computer analysis service. They can provide you with a computer analysis of your budget as compared with others from districts of similar size in your region or nationwide. Also, all state education departments put out statistical reports. You can pick out districts your size and compare them with your own.)

4. The school food service budget portion of the budget document should demonstrate that you're doing the best you can with cost-saving measures and improved management techniques to absorb cost increases and that you are seeking to be as self-supporting as possible.

5. Go after subsidies to maintain a quality program. Approach this from the premise that you are only filling in the gap between your revenues and expenses.

6. You probably will not be competing for funds with instruction, but rather with support services such as maintenance, plant operations, transportation, etc.

7. Don't attack other programs directly by citing specific examples—it could be counter-productive. Speak in general terms. Cite the kind of support provided to school food service in situations similar to yours (statistics help) and to similar support services in your school by your board. Emphasize the percentage of the total budget that similar school districts provide to school food service.

8. Develop a strategic plan for defending the school food service budget. Consider timing carefully. Know your facts, and use class and polish.

*The ERS address is 1800 North Kent Street, Arlington, VA 22209. The telephone number is (703) 243-2100.

DECISION-MAKERS' DOZEN:
Twelve Questions School Board Members, Superintendents, and Principals Should Ask Themselves If They are Considering Dropping Out of The School Lunch and Breakfast Programs

1. What is the purpose of the School Food and Nutrition Programs funded by the Federal Government? What educational purpose do the School Food and Nutrition Programs serve?

2. Are the current programs operated effectively and efficiently?

3. What are the changes in the existing programs which would make them more cost-effective and more acceptable to the customer?

4. What are the advantages of participating in the School Food and Nutrition Programs?

5. What are the disadvantages of participating in the School Food and Nutrition Programs?

6. Will another type of food service program be offered to the student? How will it compare nutritionally to school lunch and breakfast?

7. Will the sale price of the meals or menu items increase?

8. Do you anticipate more or less customers (students and faculty members) to participate in another type of food service?

9. Would the student who qualifies for free or reduced-price meals continue to receive meals at no cost or at the reduced sale price?

10. How would the school community and the parents react?

11. Would it be necessary to modify existing equipment for an alternate program?

12. How will the personnel who are employed by the School Food Nutrition Programs be affected?

You can influence the decision-making process. You should question doubtful administrative decisions and defend your belief in the school lunch program. Last year, 60 schools in our state withdrew from the National School Lunch Program, directly affecting thousands of children. Our city would have closed its kitchens also except for the relentless persuasion of the food service workers themselves.

—Local school food service worker

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APPENDIX A

CONFERENCE AGENDA
MAINTAINING QUALITY SCHOOL LUNCH PROGRAMS: DOING MORE WITH LESS

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 2nd

7:00-9:00 pm	Get Acquainted Party, Pan American Room, Capital Hilton, 16th & K Streets, N.W.

THURSDAY, JUNE 3rd

8:00 am	Continental Breakfast, Institute for Educational Leadership, 1001 Connecticut Avenue, N.W., Suite 310
8:30	Welcome Nancy Amidei, Executive Director, Food Research and Action Center
8:40	Self Introduction of Group: Discussion of Expectations from the Conference
9:00-9:45	Panel Presentation Jim Kitson, Controlling Costs in School Lunch Thelma Dalman, Creative and Cost-Effective Menu Planning Jane Wynn, Cost Saving and Productivity Ann Smith, Can Computers Save Costs in The School Lunch Program?
9:45-11:00	Small Group Discussion of Panel Presentation and Discussion on Specific Recommendations for Inclusion in Conference Booklet
11:00-11:15	Break
11:15-12:30 pm	Full Group Discussion of Specific Recommendations of Small Groups
12:30-2:00	Lunch
2:00-2:45	Panel Presentation Darrel Gray, How Commodities Can Stretch School Lunch Dollars! Kristy Wilbur, Cooperative Buying Mary Nix, How Can Student Participation Be Increased? Charles Hughes, Labor-Management Relationships
2:45-4:00	Small Group Discussion of Panel Presentation and Discussion on Specific Recommendations for Inclusion in Conference Booklet
4:00-4:15	Break
4:15-5:15	Full Group Discussion of Specific Recommendations of Small Groups
6:00-8:00	Reception, Institute for Educational Leadership, 1001 Connecticut Avenue, N.W., Suite 310

FRIDAY, JUNE 4th

8:00 am	Continental Breakfast, Institute for Educational Leadership, 1001 Connecticut Avenue, N.W., Suite 310
8:30-9:30	Discussion of Additional Cost Savings Topics
9:30-10:10	How to Influence the Decision-Making Process of School Officials—Panel Discussion Joseph Ranieri, Principal Edward Anderson, Superintendent Nelly Weil, School Board Member John Hanger, Community Advocate Merrie Sullivan, Union Member
10:10-10:45	Group Response to Panel Presentation
10:45-11:00	Break
11:00-11:40	Panel Presentation Shirley Watkins, Getting the Powerful on the Side of School Lunch Patti Whitney, How to Improve the Public Image of School Lunch Gaynell Winzenread, Community Organizing Around the School Lunch Program Dr. William Leonard, Pointers on Analyzing A School Budget
11:40-12:15 pm	Group Discussion on Panel Presentation
12:15-1:15	Luncheon Guest Speaker: Mr. James P. Camerlo (Mountain Empire Dairymen, Florence, CO), The Importance of Forming Coalitions
1:15-2:00	How to Use Your Local Media Effectively in Presenting the Case for School Lunch Paola Scommegna, Media Specialist, Bread for The World
2:00-3:00	Group Discussion of Contents of Booklet on Doing More With Less, Plans for Distribution of Booklet and Follow-Up Activities

APPENDIX B

PARTICIPANTS
MAINTAINING QUALITY SCHOOL LUNCH PROGRAMS: DOING MORE WITH LESS (A CONFERENCE SPONSORED BY THE CHILD NUTRITION FORUM)

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Chris Burch, American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees

Marshall Matz, Firm of Barnett and Alagia

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Mary Ruth Herbers, Bread for the World

Cecilia Perry, Food Research and Action Center

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Linda Naida, National Grange

Panel Moderators

Susan Fridy, National Milk Producers Federation

Marshall Matz, Firm of Barnett and Alagia

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Full Group Discussion Leaders

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APPENDIX C

ADVISORY PANEL
MAINTAINING QUALITY SCHOOL LUNCH PROGRAMS: DOING MORE WITH LESS

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National Parent Teachers Association

Brenda Lucas
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APPENDIX D

OTHER SOURCES OF INFORMATION ON DOING MORE WITH LESS

American School Food Service Association Special Blue Ribbon Study Committee Report on Commodities and the U.S. Department of Agriculture Response, *School Food Service Journal*, June/July 1982, p. 168. **Write to:** ASFSA, 4101 East Iliff Avenue, Denver, CO 80222.

Surviving The Budget Cuts: Money-Saving Tips For School Meals Programs by Alexia Gunther-Bowley and Patti Whitney. **Write to:** Patti Whitney, California Rural Legal Assistance Foundation, 2111 Mission Street, Suite 401, San Francisco, CA 94110.

U.S. Department of Agriculture's *Food and Nutrition* magazine issue on *Cutting School Lunch Costs Without Sacrificing Quality*. **Write to:** Food and Nutrition Service, External Printing Services Branch, Office of Public Information, Room 823, 3101 Park Center Drive, Alexandria, VA 22302 for a copy of *Food and Nutrition*, April 1982, Volume 12, Number 2.

Making the Most of Your School Lunch. **Write to:** New England Regional Office, Food and Nutrition Service, USDA, 33 North Avenue, Burlington, MA 01803.

Effective Food Service Management Using Computers. **Write to:** Judy Snow, Information Officer, FNS-USDA Southwest Region, 1100 Commerce Street, Room 5-C-30, Dallas, TX 75242.

Taste . . . Your Choice. **Write to:** National Dairy Council, 6300 North River Road, Rosemont IL 60018.

FRAC's Guide to Quality School Lunch and Breakfast Programs. **Write to:** FRAC, 1319 F Street, N.W., Suite 500, Washington, DC 20004.